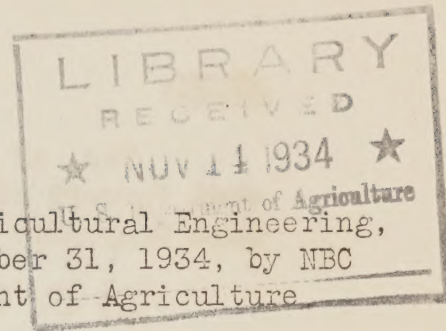


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BETTER FARM HOMES FOR THE FUTURE



A radio interview between Wallace Ashby, Bureau of Agricultural Engineering, and Morse Salisbury, Radio Service, broadcast Wednesday, October 31, 1934, by NBC and a network of 50 associate radio stations, in the Department of Agriculture period, National Farm and Home Hour.

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SALISBURY:

Two weeks ago, I announced to Farm and Home listeners that they could get copies of a new Farmers' Bulletin, No. 1738-F, "Farmhouse Plans." Several score of requests have arrived for this bulletin. The interest shown has led us to ask the author, Mr. Wallace Ashby, to return to the Farm and Home Hour microphone and tell us something more about the planning helps available from the Department and the State colleges to the farm families who want to improve their homes.

I suppose Mr. Ashby's story will logically start with the Farm Housing Survey conducted last winter. Dr. Stanley, as well as Mr. Ashby in previous talks, has told us something about this survey. But perhaps, Mr. Ashby, you might refresh our recollection of the facts it revealed about the farm housing situation as it existed last year.

ASHBY:

All right, Morse. Here are some of the facts for you and the listeners -- The survey was conducted in 352 counties in 46 States. Six hundred and thirty thousand farm families reported on the condition of their houses.

There are about 6 1/4 million farm houses in the country. On the basis of the survey reports, engineers estimate that about half of them are in fairly good structural condition. Of course, many of these houses are poorly arranged and lack modern conveniences, but at least the houses are reasonably sound. This speaks well both for the men who built them and for the owners who have taken care of them through the lean years.

About one farm house out of six should be replaced since repair would be unsatisfactory and cost too much. Two farm houses out of six need rather extensive repairs to their structures; things like new foundations, new roofs, new floors, general repair and replacement of the exterior walls, or refinishing of the interior. Five farm houses out of six don't have modern plumbing and heating equipment and electricity.

SALISBURY:

Of course, Mr. Ashby, you and the other engineers and home economists and architects who went over the results of the survey know that at present not many farmers have the money to replace the very badly rundown houses, and repair the others that need repair.

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ASHBY:

Yes, of course, we know that. But the aim of the survey was to find what farmers of the country need to do in the way of improving their homes when they have the funds or feel justified in borrowing.

At the time farm families reported their plans to the surveyors, it was apparent that they didn't feel they could do more than a small fraction of what they'd like to do in the way of improvements and new construction. For instance, in place of the million new farm houses that could well be built, farmers were planning to build only a quarter of a million new houses in the next three years. And in place of spending the average amount of \$500 estimated as necessary to repair houses in the way they should be repaired, the average farm family was planning to spend only about \$25 this year.

However, farm people like to think ahead about their improvements and many people who haven't the money now are thinking about how they will build or remodel later on.

SALISBURY:

That difference between what it's possible to do now, and what might well be done for better farm housing presents a tremendous problem. Perhaps part of the solution will be found in the Federal Housing Administration's program for rural areas. But we can't go into that today. I might say that as soon as plans for easing credit on farm housing expenditures and for community organization to stimulate repairs and new building are ready for operations, the information will be in the hands of local bankers and builders. Now returning to the main point of our discussion today, Mr. Ashby, -- You've told us about the indications of a tremendous need for new farm homes. You've indicated that perhaps a quarter of a million new homes may be built in the next three years. That would point to a wide interest in such a service of plans for well-designed low-cost farm houses as is told about in Bulletin 1738-F. I believe Farm and Home listeners would be interested in knowing more about how these plans were developed.

ASHBY:

Well, I won't tell the story in detail. Briefly, the plans grew out of the cooperative work of home economists, agricultural engineers, and architects. I think I'm correct in saying that this is the first time a group of members of the three professions have joined hands in planning houses.

The work was done in Washington and at 16 State agricultural colleges. We prepared more than 100 plans for houses of different sizes and styles suited to different climates of the United States. Then we chose 40 of the plans to put into Bulletin 1738-F.

SALISBURY:

Let me ask you if you followed any general principles in designing these houses.

ASHBY:

Yes, we did. We tried to plan them so that they would give the farm family the utmost in comfort and beauty for each dollar spent. I should like to tell you of one unique point in our method of developing the plans.

SALISBURY:

And what's that, Mr. Ashby?

ASHBY:

It's this: We planned these farm homes around the back door and the kitchen.

SALISBURY:

Why not? The back door is the main entrance to the farm house, and the kitchen is its most important room.

ASHBY:

Exactly. So for each house we started by placing the rear entrance where it will be convenient to the driveway and the path to the barn. Then the inside of the house is arranged so that when the men come in they can leave their wraps and clean up without making a muss in the kitchen, or getting in the housewife's way as she fixes the meals. All of these kitchens have the stove and work table and sink grouped so that they are handy to each other and the dining table, but the kitchen doors are placed so that there isn't any reason for men or children to go into the busy part of the room. The same principle of keeping traffic paths where they won't interfere with the use of the rooms is followed all through the house.

SALISBURY:

That idea of keeping the paths through the house where they do not interfere with the use of the rooms is mighty interesting. In reading your bulletin I've also been interested in another thing - the large amount of storage space in the kitchen and the number of closets.

ASHBY:

Yes, the women insisted on plenty of storage space, especially for food and kitchen equipment. The home economists, of course, took the lead in developing plans for the kitchens. I think home makers will enjoy studying the results of their work.

SALISBURY:

Another thing in the bulletin that interested me is the number of plans for houses that will grow with the family.

ASHBY:

Yes, more than half of the 40 plans illustrated in the bulletin are drawn so that two to four additional rooms can be built without disturbing the arrangement of the house.

SALISBURY:

There are a number of other interesting and practical features about the plans, but I think we should make some other points clear to the listeners. For one thing, I believe you should explain how a person intending to build may make use of the bulletin.

ASHBY:

I'll be glad to. First, let me repeat that even if a family doesn't intend to build right away, it's a good idea to begin studying possible plans. The average farm house is used for about 60 years, and a mistake in selecting a plan may inconvenience your grandchildren and great grandchildren. So be sure you have a satisfactory plan before you build, and don't make changes after the building starts.

That leads me to another point. The bulletin contains only sketches and floor plans of the 40 farm houses. It does not contain complete drawings for the carpenter. So the way to use the bulletin is to study it, decide on which plan best fits your location and purse, and then get the complete drawings.

SALISBURY:

We should make it plain that the Department does not issue complete working drawings, Mr. Ashby.

ASHBY:

I was coming to that. As Morse says, the Department of Agriculture does not issue blueprints of the working drawings. We distribute one copy of each set of working drawings to each state college where the plan can be used to advantage. The college extension service uses these drawings to make blueprints for farmers. They are issued by the State agricultural colleges. They are issued at cost. That's about 15 cents a sheet. The drawings for most houses take up three or four sheets. But let me ask you not to write indiscriminately for working drawings just to look them over. They are issued at cost, it is true. But if too many people asked for them just out of curiosity, it might be that the colleges wouldn't be able to supply everyone who wanted them for actual building purposes. So ask only for working drawings you intend to use.

SALISBURY:

Then the procedure is: Send to the Department of Agriculture for Bulletin 1738-F. Study the floor plans and sketches in it. Pick out the plan that you believe will be best adapted to your conditions. Write to the State College for working drawings of that plan.

ASHBY:

That's right.

SALISBURY:

I think we ought to toss a bouquet to Mr. Ashby and the agricultural engineers of the Department and the colleges. They have worked out a very practical and economical system of exchanging these working drawings among the different colleges, so a farm family anywhere in the country can have access to the drawings for the house its members want, whether or not the plans were prepared at their own State college. The Bureau of Agricultural Engineering at Washington acts as the clearing house.

Now, Mr. Ashby, any final comments?

ASHBY:

I suppose I should drop a curtsy acknowledging the kind words. I hope our exchange system for plans is of service to the farm families. No particular credit to us here in Washington. The service is the result of cooperative effort by the agricultural engineers at all the colleges and in the Department.

Now one or two final remarks. I should like to say that people who intend to remodel their present houses may find suggestions in the bulletin. We have tried to design each room for comfort and usefulness. The plans may suggest some principles to follow in adding rooms to existing houses.

As to special plans for use in repairing and remodeling: We hope to get out a bulletin containing sketches and photographs of repair and remodeling jobs already done by farmers in different sections on their home. I take it Morse Salisbury will let you know when this bulletin is ready.

SALISBURY:

Yes, indeed. I may say that I was in Mr. Ashby's workshop last week and found him completing copy for that bulletin. I'll surely let you listeners know when it is off the press.

And meanwhile, you may have a copy of Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F, containing the plans for 40 houses. We can send only one copy to any one family. The supply is limited. If you want it, send to the United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., and ask for Farmers' Bulletin 1738-F, "Farmhouse Plans."

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